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For Immediate Release: March 2, 2012
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Wayland Man Dies in Electrical Fire

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Wayland Fire Chief Vincent J. Smith said the cause of last night's fatal fire at 2 Gage Road was electrical. The fire took the life of an elderly gentleman who lived alone in the house.

Investigators determined that the fire originated in the basement and the cause was an extension cord that may have been overloaded, but more importantly could not function correctly because there was a large pile of material on top of it. The heat from the extension cord could not dissipate into the air as it normally would and the trapped heat finally caused a failure of the extension cord. "The home was extremely cluttered making an emergency escape from the home nearly impossible and making it extremely difficult for firefighters to gain entry, to conduct search and rescue, and to put out the fire," said State Fire Marshal Coan. "Hoarding is a serious safety issue not only for the occupants of a building, but also for responding firefighters," he added.

Chief Smith said, "I offer our condolences to the family and friends of the victim. This is a tragic outcome that so many agencies had worked to try to prevent." The last building fire death in Wayland was in 1995.

The fire was jointly investigated by the Wayland Fire Department, Wayland Police Department and State Police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal and to Middlesex District Attorney Leone's Office.

Recent studies have identified compulsive hoarding as a disorder that goes beyond simply having too many possessions. It can lead to serious fire, health and safety issues. Many communities in Massachusetts have formed local hoarding task forces that involve social service agencies and fire, building and health officials. Addressing the problem effectively requires a multi-disciplinary approach. Many compulsive hoarders are elders and can be considered elders at risk. Referrals can be made to elder protective services by calling the statewide Elder Abuse Hotline 1-800-922-2275 for investigation.

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